

The Effects of Teaching Abroad on Personal and Professional Development

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Abstract: With increasing global change, schools have become more culturally diverse recently. Teachers must address the needs of students from diverse backgrounds to create an effective learning environment through personal and professional development. They need to increase their cultural awareness, and develop their teaching skills to create a learning setting in which students respect each other. Working abroad help teachers expose to innovative learning styles, educational materials and curricula which play key roles in the development of their teaching practice. Furthermore, living in a different culture enables teachers to gain new skills and knowledge which they can integrate into their own teaching strategies. This article presents the benefits of working abroad in many aspects.

Keywords: Working Abroad, Personal Development, Professional Development, International Experience

Despite its difficulties for some, working abroad has always provided advantageous for teachers to enhance their personal and professional development. International experience not only allows teachers to develop their cultural awareness which will allow them to be in good relation with students from diverse groups but also enables them to develop teaching strategies to teach effectively (Altun, 2015).

The greatest advantage of international experience is to know about different cultures and to learn about the life of the people from different nations which allows to be aware of the needs of the students belonging to different cultures well and to provide effective education to the students by keeping these needs in mind while training them. In order for the teachers to teach the students belonging to the different cultures effectively it is very crucial to know their values and beliefs (De Villar & Jiang, 2012). It goes without saying that insisting on the same curriculum and teaching methods will please diverse student body.

Teachers who are at the heart of education need to understand and respond effectively to the learning needs of their students; therefore, it holds an important place for teachers to know the language of their students, be aware of their cultural values, and promote attitudes that encourage learning. International experience will have the following effects on teachers (De Villar & Jiang, 2012).

- a. They enable the schools to understand that they are a small sample of large cultural structures in the vicinity.

- b. Accept the schools as a cultural environment and make observations and ask questions for effective adjustment which enables them to learn about the people of that culture.
- c. They observe differences in how learners learn. Teachers who observe these differences while working abroad can also apply these abilities in their own countries. Different practices help teachers develop teaching abilities and professional development.
- d. They understand that the curriculum can develop new ideas and materials. Teachers working abroad can contribute to the education and learning in their own countries by acquiring new ideas and materials. At the same time they can apply the good aspects of the curriculum in their own countries.
- e. Teachers should understand themselves as risk takers because teachers always try new ideas and new ways of teaching. International experience will allow teachers see new teaching strategies, thereby make them available to their own countries.
- f. Teachers should understand the complexity and richness of cultural differences. Teachers working abroad are curious to learn new cultures and they are eager to learn from others. They are interested in examining new ways of teaching.

Teachers who acquire these abilities by working abroad are more capable of understanding their students. It is certain that teachers who observe different learning methods of different cultures will help their students more by applying these methods to their own students when they return to their own countries. They can improve students' learning desires by trying different ways of learning. Many teachers who work abroad understand themselves and others better in the cultural aspect. These experienced teachers are more knowledgeable both culturally and politically, and when they return to their own country, they show more talent in personal development than those who have no abroad experience. Being open to intercultural sensitivity and differences in cultures is another feature of working abroad. Teachers with international experience are more eager to learn about different cultures and show more positive but more critically-minded attitudes towards their own countries.

Career development and personal success are also benefits of working abroad. Teachers with international experience have a higher sense of authority and are more willing to share their knowledge and skills with others and have more job opportunities thanks to the prestige they have gained from working abroad or participating in some programs in other countries. Working abroad help teachers gain self-confidence and self-determination, tolerance to other people, and understanding and respecting others' views. They easily adapt to their surroundings, they have self-confidence while talking to others. They often use the phrase "I understand that I have common points even with different people from other countries," or "I have learned how to listen to other people and what they talk about and I do not force others to accept my own ideas any more". International experience can destroy teachers' stereotypical thoughts about others and their cultures. These teachers keep an eye on cultural differences that they have never seen or thought about before which is important for understanding other people to communicate better with.

Teachers who work abroad attach importance to career development by setting new goals. When they return to their country after their overseas experience, they prefer to work more in international affairs. Teachers working abroad can evaluate their own countries from different angles. Even more, working abroad can show them that their beliefs and ideas are not always true. They can think about a case from different perspectives and come up with a good idea. International experience might allow teachers to become more dedicated. Meeting new instructional methods, curricula, and lesson materials increase interest of teachers in teaching.

It has become a significant issue to teach diverse student groups. In the global world, effective teaching has become a difficult task. Due to the political and economic ties between people and countries education cannot be limited to just one nation. Instead, it is necessary to think of an international education that addresses the nations of the global community. For this reason, international programs for teachers have increased. It has always been emphasized that the experiences of teachers who have worked in other countries are valuable in the sense that global education can be done better by means of their experiences. Willard-Holt (2001) argues that international experience teaches about curriculum, teaching strategies, performing effective presentations and giving importance to personal values. She states that the greatest benefits of working abroad is learning to be tolerant, and understanding oneself and others.

Teachers who have international experience develop cultural empathy and they learn to be sensitive to other cultures and people. Rodriguez (2011) in a study conveys the experiences of the teachers who went to Bolivia from America. In the study teachers pointed out that they experienced cultural, global and educational developments and improved their abilities. They also stressed that they had the opportunity to compare the education system of Bolivia with their own and transferred the practices of the Bolivian education system to their own countries and most of them claimed that they achieved more positive results than they had in the past.

Merryfield (1997) states that international experience allows teachers to strengthen the relationship between them and their students because teachers who have worked abroad are successful in communicating with students. O'Brien (2006) investigated the experiences of American teachers in Kenya and Tanzania and found that the teachers developed their talents of creating an effective learning setting in which all students are interested in by using different lesson materials in their lessons. Particularly, the teachers told stories about their experiences and enriched the content of the lessons. As they have an opportunity to increase their global awareness while working abroad, they can easily change their teaching methods. Through including references from the countries where they have worked, they can develop the content of their lessons. When students are exposed to globally diverse examples, they widen their horizon. The use of lesson materials is important in education in that it impacts on students' better understanding. Teachers who have international experience are at advantage because they can use real stories and pictures from the countries where they have worked to engage students in learning. The implementation of these materials not only motivates students to learn better but also enable them to become culturally aware. It is true that students are inspired by means of lesson materials that they have not met before.

Conclusion

Teachers who work in other countries have knowledge of the contents of the lessons because they meet new curricula. They can transfer these experiences when they go back to their own countries. Furthermore, they can apply the information and teaching methods in their own countries as well. Teachers have the opportunity to have close examination of new curricular and transfer their useful parts to their own countries to enrich the learning. Besides, international experience can improve teachers' new teaching abilities and enable them to develop different attitudes towards learning and teaching. Working abroad allows teachers to gain the following features:

- Teachers who work abroad can encourage students to have global perspective by emphasizing the importance of global vision.
- They have the opportunity to compare their international experience with their own country's education. Often they can share the benefits of the new education system they have met abroad with their students, and they can increase the quality of the education by applying new teaching strategies which they have seen abroad.
- Introducing these differences and similarities helps students improve their knowledge and improve their ability to comment on global issues.
- Teachers with international experience can motivate their students with a new curriculum and encourage success by implementing new teaching strategies in their home country.
- Teachers who work abroad have the opportunity to constantly evaluate the educational system in the country.
- International experience improves teaching quality of teachers. Teachers approach new ideas concerning teaching more broadly. They can develop strategies for critical situations.
- They can teach students from diverse groups more successfully and their classroom management will be much better.

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